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ABSTRACT

The Cleveland Scholarship Program (CSP), Cleveland, Ohio, is one of the school choice options available to families in the city. This report provides a snapshot of the CSP at the start of the 1999-2000 school year. Despite the claims of critics, the CSP contributes to racial integration in the city by providing families with access to private schools that, on average, are better racially integrated than are the public schools of the Cleveland metropolitan area. Nearly one-fifth (19%) of the recipients of a voucher in Cleveland attend private schools that have a racial composition that resembles the average racial composition of the Cleveland area. Only 5.2% of public school students in the Cleveland are in comparably integrated schools. More than three-fifths (60.7%) of public school students in metropolitan Cleveland attend schools that are almost entirely white or almost entirely minority in their racial composition. Half the students in the CSP are in comparably segregated schools. The increased integration in private schools participating in the choice program is achieved without sacrificing the economic and religious heterogeneity of those schools. Of all students who attend a publicly financed school of choice in Cleveland, only 16.5% currently attend a religious school. The evidence on racial integration suggests that access to a choice program that includes religious schools makes a significant contribution to promoting racial integration in Cleveland schools. (Contains 14 endnotes.) (SLD)

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Choice and Community:

The Racial, Economic, and Religious Context of Parental Choice in Cleveland

A Buckeye Institute Policy Report prepared by
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Choice and Community:

The Racial, Economic, and Religious Context of Parental Choice in Cleveland

Executive Summary

Despite the claims of critics, school choice in Cleveland contributes to racial integration by providing families with access to private schools that, on average, are better racially integrated than are the public schools in the Cleveland metropolitan area.

• Nearly a fifth (19.0%) of recipients of a voucher in Cleveland attend private schools that have a racial composition that resembles the average racial composition of the Cleveland area (defined as having a proportion of minority students in the school that is within 10% of the average proportion of minorities in metropolitan Cleveland). Only 5.2% of public schools students in the Cleveland metropolitan area are in comparably integrated schools.

• More than three-fifths (60.7%) of public school students in metropolitan Cleveland attend schools that are almost entirely white or almost entirely minority in their racial composition. Half (50%) the students in the Cleveland Scholarship Program are in comparably segregated schools.

The increased integration in private schools participating in the choice program is achieved without sacrificing the economic and religious heterogeneity of those schools. Of all of the students who attend a publicly-financed school of choice in Cleveland, only 16.5% currently attend a religious school. Yet the evidence on racial integration suggests that access to a choice program that includes religious schools makes a significant contribution to promoting racial integration in Cleveland schools.

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I. Introduction

Some people oppose school choice because they fear that it will foster racial segregation, cultural divisiveness and social fragmentation. As Secretary of Education Richard Riley has stated, public schools, built on the concept of the common school, teach "children important lessons about both the commonality and diversity of American culture. These lessons are conveyed not only through what is taught in the classroom, but by the very experience of attending school with a diverse mix of students."[1]

Private schools are often seen as antithetical to this ideal of the common school, as havens for homogenous groups of students. Expanding access to private schools via vouchers or other forms of publicly sponsored school choice, critics argue, would only exacerbate the problem of segregation created by private schools.

David Berliner, former president of the American Educational Research Association, warned that "voucher programs would allow for splintering along ethnic and racial lines. Our primary concern is that voucher programs could end up resembling the ethnic cleansing now occurring in Kosovo."[2] The Harrisburg, Pennsylvania school superintendent was even more alarmist when he told a television audience that school choice would help create "Hitlerian regimes."[3]

Yet the evidence from the Cleveland Scholarship Program suggests that these critics are mistaken. Rather than contributing to segregation, school choice in Cleveland offers students an opportunity to attend schools that are better racially integrated than what the public schools offer. This improvement in racial integration is achieved without sacrificing religious and economic

school choice in Cleveland offers students an opportunity to attend schools that are better racially integrated than what the public schools offer.

Public schools are hampered in their ability to offer racially integrated schools because they usually assign students to schools based on where they live.

diversity. Earlier research has also shown that the CSP leads to improved academic achievement, expanded opportunities for poor and minority families, and higher levels of reported parental satisfaction and involvement.[4] The CSP is therefore a valuable addition to the range of publicly-funded choices already available to residents of Cleveland. Those publicly-funded choices include a community (or charter) school program, a magnet school program, as well as the CSP.

The information presented in this paper is a snapshot of the racial, religious, and economic composition of the CSP at the start of the 1999-2000 academic year and could change significantly in subsequent years. The participation of suburban school districts in the CSP, which is permitted by the law but has not yet occurred, could substantially alter the racial, economic, and religious characteristics of the scholarship program.

In addition, the creation and expansion of the community school program in the last two years has significantly reduced the percentage of students attending secular schools in the scholarship program by drawing away the two largest scholarship schools. The Hope schools, which have now been re-established as community schools, educated nearly 15% of all scholarship students in past years. The removal of these secular schools from the scholarship program has also had a profound effect on the racial, economic, and religious composition of the CSP. If the relative attractiveness of the community school program were reduced in future years, it is likely that more secular schools would be drawn to the scholarship as opposed to the community school program.[5] It is important to bear

in mind that dramatic changes in the broader set of choice programs that have occurred and are likely to occur in the future limit our ability to describe the racial, economic, and religious characteristics of the CSP, since it is a program that is in a constant state of flux.

II. Racial Integration

Public schools are hampered in their ability to offer racially integrated schools because they usually assign students to schools based on where they live. Attaching schooling to housing tends to replicate and reinforce racial segregation in housing. Private schools, however, can and typically do draw students from across political and neighborhood boundaries, allowing them to transcend segregation in housing. Analyses of a national sample of 12th graders collected by the U.S. Department of Education, show that private schools students are, in fact, more likely to be in racially mixed classes than are public school students.[6] According to that sample, more than half of all public school 12th graders graders (55%) are in classes that have more than 90% or fewer than 10% minority students. In private schools, just 41% of students are in similarly segregated classrooms. And private school students are markedly more likely to be in classes that come close to resembling the nation's demographics. More than a third (37%) of private school students are in classes whose racial composition is within 10% of the national average. Just 18% of public school students are in classes that are similarly mixed.

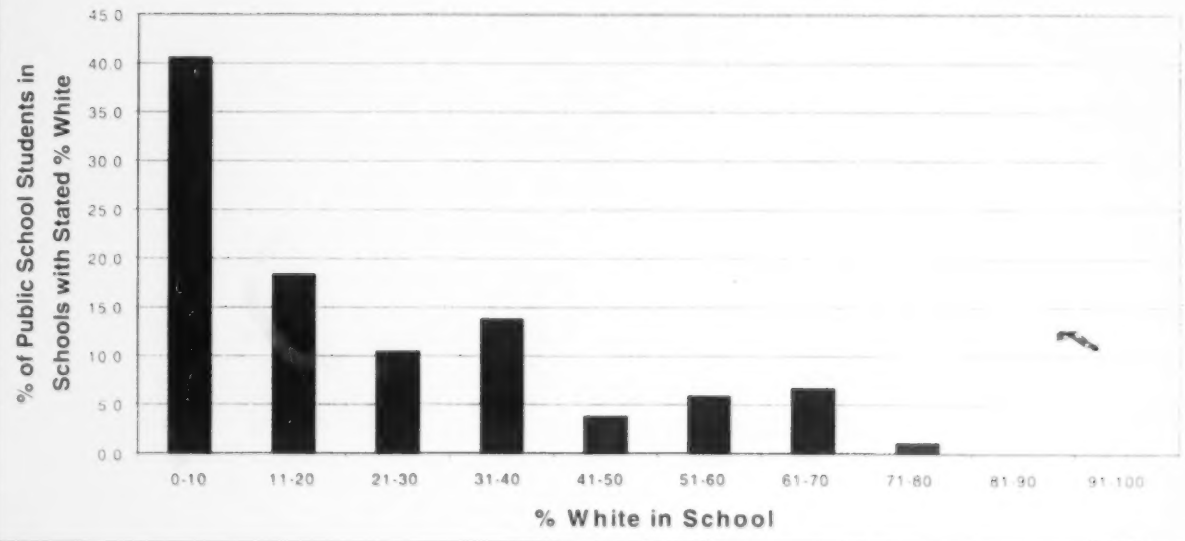
Employing a similar methodology in examining racial integration in Cleveland we see a similar pattern of results. The percentage of white students in each elementary and middle school was

Analyses of a national sample of 12th graders collected by the U.S. Department of Education show that private school students are, in fact, more likely to be in racially mixed classes than are public school students.

obtained for the Cleveland City School District, the suburban Cleveland school districts, and private schools participating in the CSP.[7] Data on the public schools were obtained from the Ohio Department of Education web site and the Office of Assessment and Information Services.[8] Data on the participating private schools were obtained from the CSP office, the Catholic Archdiocese, and from the schools themselves. Information was available from private schools that currently educate 81% of scholarship students.

To assess racial integration we do not want to know who educates a higher percentage of minority students. Schools that had 100% minority students by law in the South had more

Figure 1
Racial Distribution in Cleveland City Public Schools

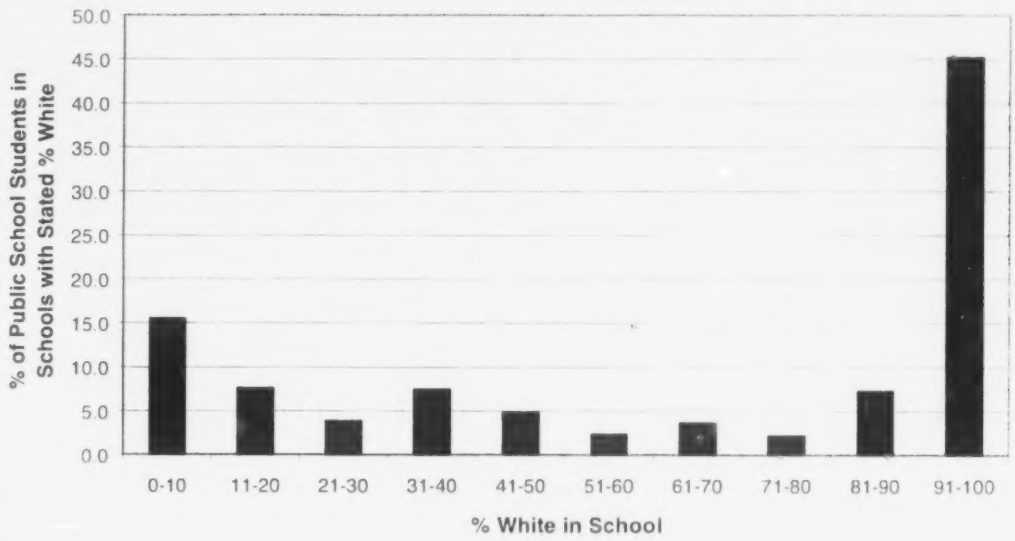


minorities but were not well integrated. What we want to know is how well distributed students are across schools with different proportions of white and minority students in them. If a system were well integrated it would have virtually all of its students attending schools whose racial composition resembled the racial composition of the broader community in which those schools were located. A poorly integrated or segregated school system would have the vast majority of its students in schools that were almost entirely composed of one racial group.

The racial distributions of students in the city of Cleveland public schools, suburban Cleveland public schools, metropolitan Cleveland public schools (city and suburbs), and private schools participating in the CSP are presented in Figures 1-4 and in Table 1. The pictures tell the story very clearly. As can be seen in Figure 1, the bulk of students in Cleveland City public schools are in buildings that are almost entirely populated with minority students. Almost two-fifths (40.5%) of Cleveland City public school students attend schools that have fewer than 10% white students (which is the same as more than 90% minority students). Another 18.3% of Cleveland City public school students attend schools that have slightly more white students, between 11 and 20% white students. Only 13.4% of Cleveland City public school students attend schools that have more than 50% white students.

In the suburbs we see almost a mirror image of the racial distribution found in the city of Cleveland (Table 1 and Figure 2-page17). More than three-fifths (62.2%) of Cleveland suburban school students attend schools that have more than 90% white students. And when we

Figure 3
Racial Distribution in Cleveland Metro Area Public Schools
(Including Cleveland City and Suburban Schools)



combine all public schools in the Cleveland metropolitan area (Table 1 and Figure 3), we see that around three-fifths of all public schools students (60.7%) attend schools that either have more than 90% white students or fewer than 10% white students.

The vast majority of public school students in the Cleveland metro-area attend schools that are almost entirely white or almost entirely minority in their racial composition.

It is also disturbing to note that very few public school students in the city of Cleveland, the suburbs, or the metro area attend schools that resemble the racial composition of the community as a whole. According to the data

collected on elementary and middle public schools, 62.5% of all students in grades K-8 are white. Yet only 5.2% of public school students in the metropolitan area attend schools that have a racial composition that is within 10% of the average racial composition. In the city the percentage of students who attend a racially representative school is somewhat higher at 10.2%. But in the suburbs it is even worse, where only 3.3% of students attend schools that have a racial mix that resembles the racial composition of the broader community.

In short, public schools in the Cleveland area are remarkably segregated. Most students attend schools that are almost all white or almost all minority and very few students attend schools that resemble the racial proportions in the whole community. Families wishing to attend a racially integrated school in the public system in Cleveland have very few opportunities to do so. The picture of racial integration among private schools participating in the choice program is far from perfect, but it is considerably better than what we see in the public schools (Table 1 and Figure 4). Less than two-fifths (35.9%) of choice students attending a private school go to a school that has fewer than 10% whites. And 14.1% of choice students attend schools with more than 90% white students. Half (50.0%) of choice students go to a school that is nearly all white or nearly all minority in its racial composition. This is somewhat better than the 60.7% of public school students who attend similarly segregated schools.

But the most striking difference between the racial integration found in the public and private systems is in the percentage of students who attend schools that resemble the community as a whole. Nearly a fifth (19.0%) of choice students attend private schools

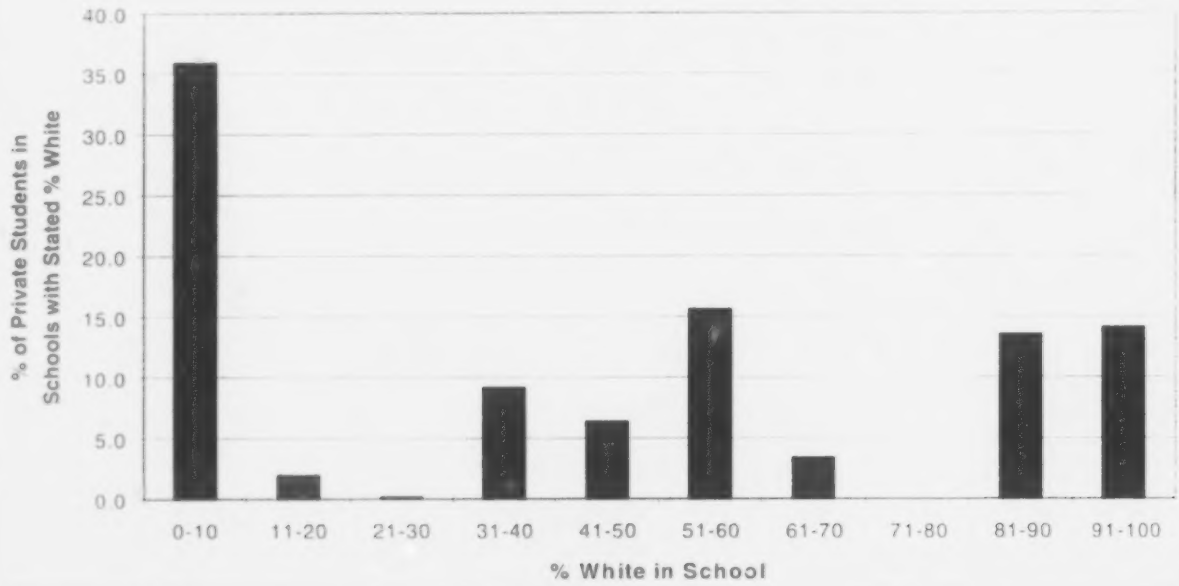
In short, public schools in the Cleveland area are remarkably segregated.

Table 1
Racial Distribution in Cleveland Area School Systems

	Cleveland City	Cleveland Suburbs	Cleveland Metro (City & Suburbs)	Participating Private
% White Students in School	% of Students in Schools with Stated % White			
0-10	40.5	6.1	15.5	35.9
11-20	18.3	3.6	7.6	1.9
21-30	10.4	1.4	3.9	0.1
31-40	13.7	5.1	7.5	9.1
41-50	3.7	5.3	4.8	6.4
51-60	5.8	1.1	2.4	15.6
61-70	6.6	2.6	3.7	3.4
71-80	1.0	2.7	2.2	0.0
81-90	0.0	10.0	7.3	13.5
91-100	0.0	62.2	45.2	14.1

that have a racial composition that is within 10% of the average racial composition in the Cleveland area. This is considerably better than the 5.2% of Cleveland metro area public school students, the 10.2% of Cleveland City public school students, or the 3.3% of Cleveland suburban public school students who attend schools that are similarly segregated schools. If a family wants to live in the Cleveland area and wants to send their children to a racially integrated school at public expense, they are more likely to do so by choosing a private school with a voucher than they are by attending a public school.

Figure 4
Racial Distribution in Participating Private Schools



Despite court orders and political pressure to improve integration in the public schools, the Cleveland Scholarship Program offers families a better opportunity for a racially integrated school experience.

III. The Religious and Economic Profile of the Cleveland Scholarship Program

Are the private schools able to offer a higher level of racial integration because they are homogeneous in other respects? It is plausible that private choice schools in Cleveland are able to achieve better racial integration only by being homogenous in terms of the economic and religious characteristics of their students. This is probably true of the Shaker Heights School District, which is arguably the best racially integrated public

Families wishing to attend an integrated school in the public system in Cleveland have very few opportunities to do so.

school district in the Cleveland metropolitan area. While Shaker Heights is able to offer schools whose racial composition more closely resembles the racial composition in the broader community, students in the district are relatively uniform in having high family incomes. Only 7.9% of Shaker Heights' students receive Aid to Dependent Children, compared to 29.4% for Cuyahoga County and 64.3% for the city of Cleveland. Perhaps the accomplishment of the Shaker Heights District in terms of racial integration is a little less impressive when one considers that it may be permitted only by the lack of economic diversity among its students.

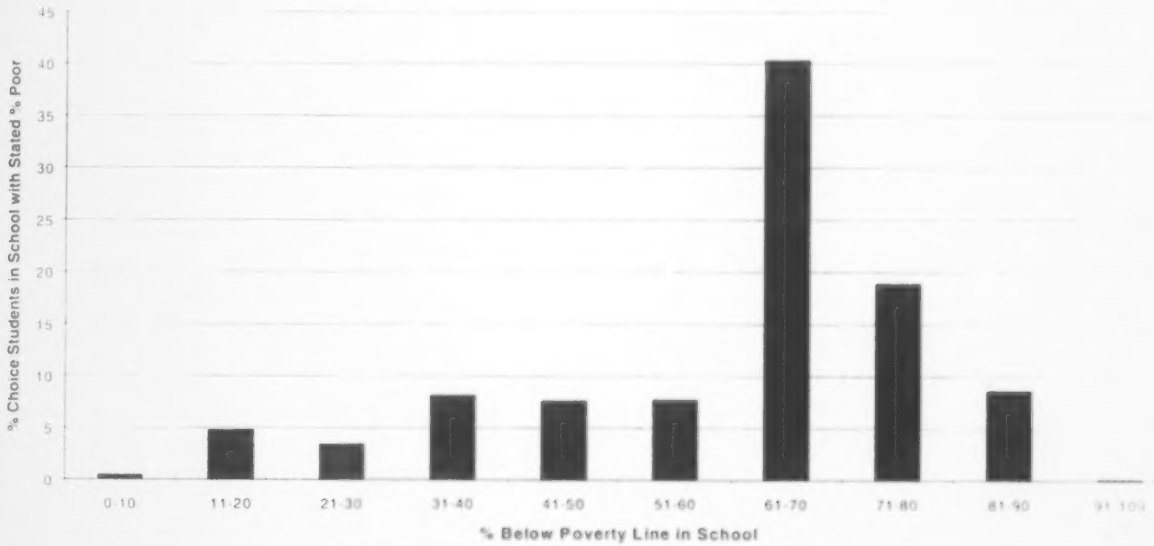
Table 3
Religious Distribution in Participating Private Schools

% Catholic in Schools	% Choice Students in School with Stated % Catholic
0-10	12.2
11-20	7.0
21-30	9.6
31-40	11.8
41-50	2.5
51-60	7.2
61-70	8.7
71-80	0.1
81-90	19.6
91-100	21.3

The students at private schools participating in the CSP, however, are not homogenous in terms of their economic status. The average choice student is at a school that has 59.3% of its students with family incomes below the federal poverty level, right in line with the average figure for the city. And as one can see in Figure 5 and Table 2, very few choice students are at private schools that are entirely populated by families below the poverty line or at schools entirely bereft of poor families.

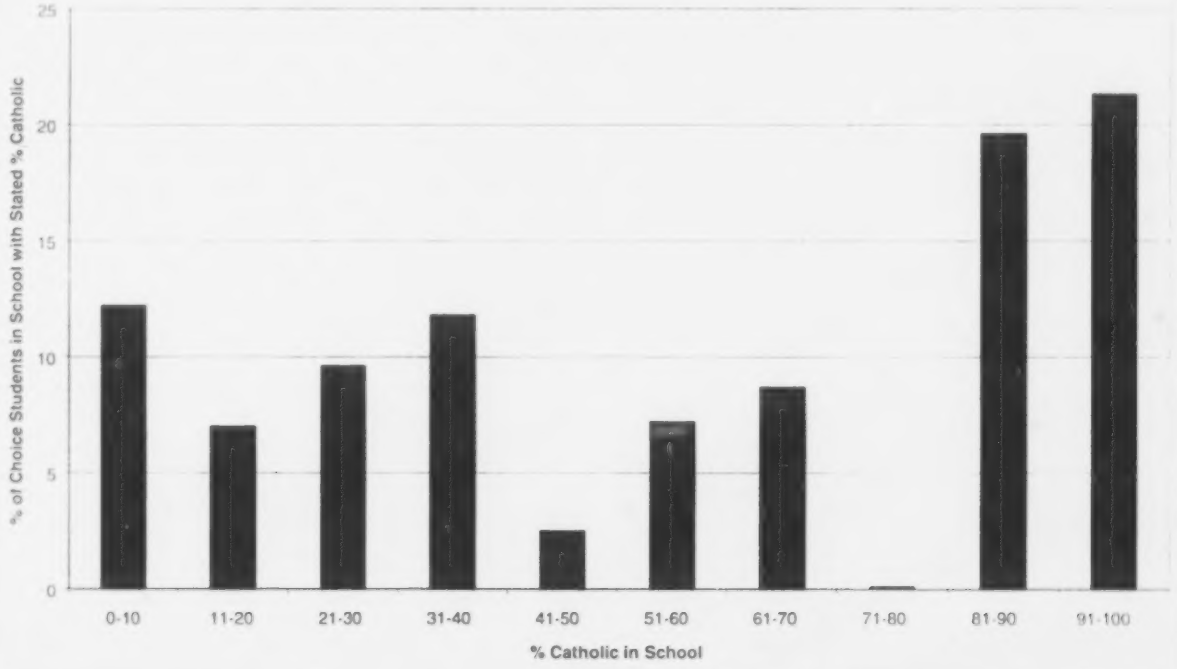
Unfortunately, comparable data on a school-by-school basis were not available from the public schools, so it is not possible to compare how well economically integrated the different school systems are. Nevertheless, one can simply look at the distribution of the choice students by the economic status in

Figure 5
Economic Distribution in Participating Private Schools



their schools and see that the achievements in racial integration are not the result of homogeneity along class lines. A clear majority of choice students attend schools with a majority of low-income families, but not all choice students attend schools populated primarily with poor families. The private schools that choice students attend are also not homogenous in terms of their religious composition (see Figure 6 and Table 3). The average choice student attends a private school where 54.0% of the students are Catholic. Yet 43.1% of choice students attend schools with fewer than 50% Catholic students. Comparable data on the religious composition of each public school in the Cleveland metropolitan area are also not available, preventing a comparision of the religious diversity in public and private schools systems. While we do

Figure 6
Religious Distribtion in Participating Private Schools



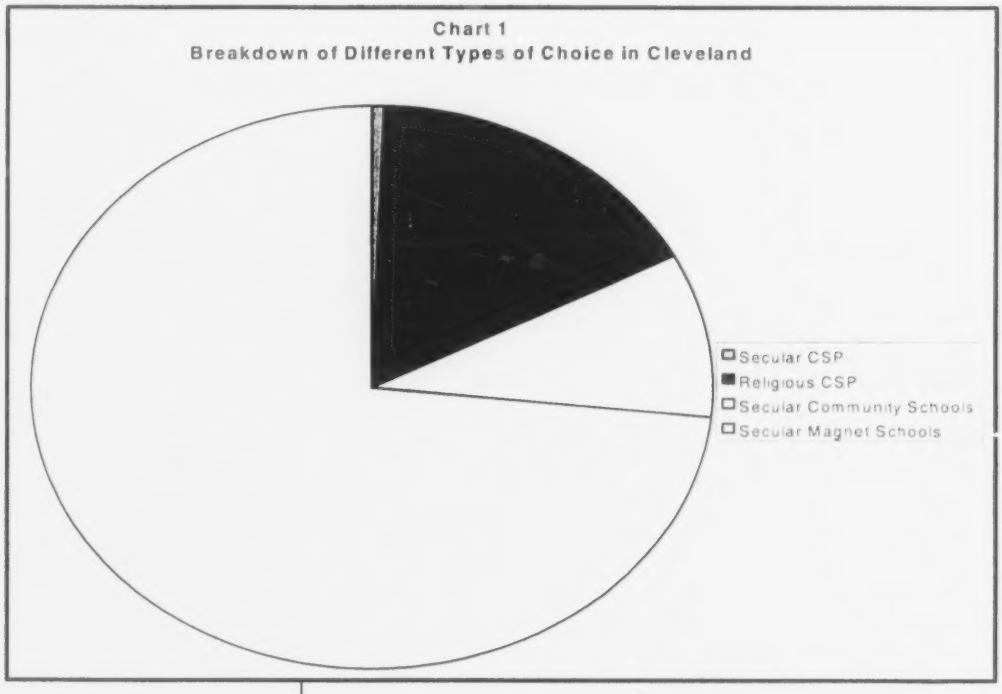
not have information on the distribution of students over schools with different economic and religious compositions, we do have information on the average demographic characteristic of CSP students and Cleveland city public school students. For example, we know that choice students, on average, have significantly lower family incomes than do Cleveland City public school students ($15,769 vs. $19,948), are significantly more likely to be raised only by their mother (68.2% vs. 40.0%), and are significantly more likely to be African-American (68.7% vs. 45.9%).[9] Yet CSP mothers have a statistically signifi-

cant advantage in the amount of education they received (13.2 vs. 12.5 years) and are more likely to attend religious services. The choice students are significantly less likely to have a learning disability (8.3% vs. 14.8%) but they are also significantly less likely to have been in classes for gifted or talented students (8.4% vs. 15.2%). In short, an analysis of these average demographic characteristics does not suggest that choice students are a particularly elite group of students. On the contrary, choice students seem in many ways relatively disadvantaged. The advantage that CSP private schools offer in terms of racial integration does not seem to be a function of their having selected advantaged students nor does it seem to be a function of the economic or religious homogeneity of the students at those schools.

IV. How Frequently Are Vouchers Used to Choose Religious Schools?

While the CSP offers a particular benefit in terms of racial integration, it is important to recognize that it is not the only type of school choice available to residents of the Cleveland metropolitan area. School choice in some form or another has existed for a long time in publicly-financed education. For the past two years students have been able to choose community schools, as charter schools are known in Ohio. And for many years before that students have been able to choose among the magnet schools and programs offered by the Cleveland City school district.[10] Programs like CSP only modify or regulate the existing choice environment. And the kinds of choices exercised with a

We know that choice students, on average, have significantly lower family incomes than do Cleveland city public school students.



voucher have to be viewed in the context of all of the other choices provided (See Table 4 and Chart 1). It is true that most (96.6%) of the 3,765 recipients of a scholarship have currently chosen a religious school.[11] Yet one has to view the choices made with vouchers in light of other available choices, which themselves may be altered or abolished over time. If we were to consider community schools as a related part of the general choice environment, then there are a total of 5,852 choosers in Cleveland of whom 3,637 (or 62.1%) have currently chosen a religious school. If we were to add the 16,184 students enrolled in magnet schools and programs in Cleveland[12] to the pool of total publicly-financed choosers, then only 16.5% of those choosers are currently enrolled in a religious school.[13]

All of these existing choice programs are related. Any change in one kind of choice program could have significant effects on the kinds of choices made in another program. For

Table 4
The Percentage of Students Who Choose a Religious School with a Voucher

Types of Choice	Religious Choices	Total Scholarship Program	Community Schools	Magnet Schools	Total Choosers	% Choosing Religious School
Scholarship Program Only	3,637	3,765			3,765	96.6
Scholarship Program and Community Schools	3,637	3,765	2,087		5,852	62.1
Scholarship Program, Community Schools, and Cleveland Magnet Schools	3,637	3,765	2,087	16,184	22,036	16.5

example, the creation of community schools as a type of choice drew the two largest secular CSP schools, the Hope Academies, from the CSP to the community school program. Prior to that change far more recipients of the scholarships attended secular schools. And in the future the community schools program could be abolished or altered, swelling the roles of the CSP once again with even more students who have selected secular schools.

It is also possible, in fact likely, that new, secular private schools will be established in the future to participate in the Cleveland Scholarship Program, although the extent to which this occurs depends on the relative attractiveness of establishing new community schools or magnet programs. In Milwaukee the number of secular private schools participating in the voucher program more than quadrupled between 1990 and 1999, from 7 to 30. The number of

In Milwaukee the number of secular private schools participating in the voucher program more than tripled between 1990 and 1999, from 7 to 30.

When one looks at the broader system of choice in Cleveland, it is clear that a small percentage of publicly-financed choosers attend religious schools.

students enrolled in secular private schools in Milwaukee grew more than six-fold during that time, from 337 to approximately 2,100.[14] In short, the types of choices exercised in the CSP depend upon the existence and nature of other choice programs and have to be viewed dynamically over time and in the context of those other programs. When one looks at the broader system of choice in Cleveland, it is clear that a small percentage of publicly-financed choosers attend religious schools.

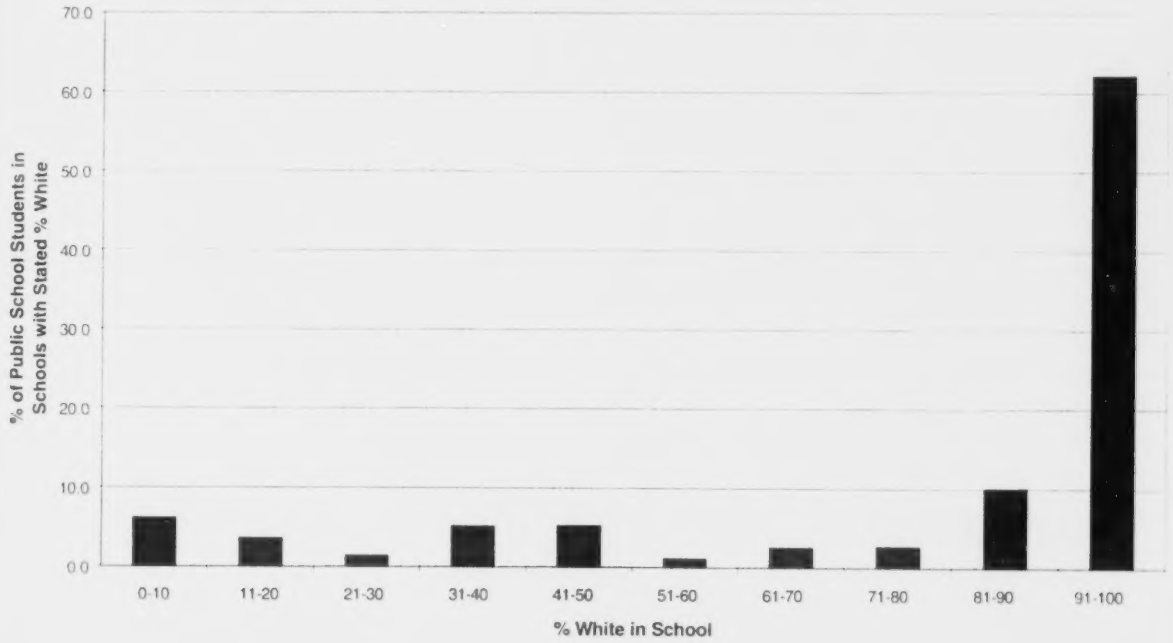
V. Conclusion

Whether the CSP exists as one of the choices available in Cleveland may have a significant effect on racial integration in schools. It is clear that not all choices that people make help promote integration. The most common type of choice, residential choice, has produced Cleveland metropolitan area public schools that are highly segregated along racial and economic lines. Private schools, and perhaps particularly religious private schools, appear able to transcend resistance to integration in housing to provide schools that are racially, economically, and religiously integrated.

It is not entirely clear why families appear to be willing to send their children to integrated private schools when they may be reluctant to send their children to integrated public schools. Perhaps families trust the private schools to provide discipline and safety in an integrated environment more than they trust public schools to do the same. Perhaps families share in the stronger sense of mission offered by private, especially religious schools, reducing the salience of race as a factor in school selection. Whatever the reason for it, the evidence is clear that contrary to the

expectations of critics school choice helps promote integration.

Figure 2
Racial Distribution in Cleveland Suburban Public Schools



VI. Notes

[1] "What Really Matters in American Education," U.S. Department of Education, published on the Web at http://www.ed.gov/Speeches/09-1997/index.html (September 23, 1997).

[2] "Experts Differ On Vouchers," *Albuquerque Journal*, May 8, 1999, p. A1.

[3] As quoted in "Pa. Voucher Plan Dies Amid 'Mean-spirited' Attacks," *School Reform News*, vol. 3, no. 8, August 1999, p. 4.

[4] Paul E. Peterson, William G. Howell, and Jay P. Greene, "An Evaluation of the Cleveland Voucher Program after Two Years," Harvard Program on Education Policy and Governance Working Paper 99-02, June, 1999;
Kim K. Metcalf, "Evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program, 1996-1999," Unpublished Manuscript, Indiana University, 1999.

[5] The scholarship has a maximum value of $2,250 per pupil. The community school program currently offers schools nearly twice as much money per pupil. Community schools in Cuyhoga County received a minimum of $4,537 from the State of Ohio last year per child in grades 1-8 and $4,195 for full-day kindergartners.

[6] Jay P. Greene, "Civic Values in Public and Private Schools," in *Learning From School Choice* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution), 1998.

[7] Suburban schools were defined as those outside of the Cleveland City School District and in Cuyahoga or Lake counties. High schools were excluded because the CSP does not currently cover those grades.

[8] http://www.ode.state.oh.us/.

"Cleveland City School District Building Profiles," Office of Assessment and Information Services, September, 1996.

[9] Paul E. Peterson, William G. Howell, and Jay P. Greene, "An Evaluation if the Cleveland Voucher Program after Two Years," Harvard Program on Education Policy and Governance Working Paper 99-02, June 1999, pp. 16-18.

[10] One could also note the fact that ever since there were school districts and attendance zones families have been able to exercise choice in education by choosing where to live in order to obtain desired schools, as long as they were not prevented by financial or racial barriers to housing.

[11] Some of these enrollment numbers have been estimated based on prior enrollments because this year's official attendance records are not yet available. Modest changes in the exact numbers have little effect on the essence of the argument being presented here.

[12] According to a phone interview with officials at the Cleveland City School District on October 6, 1999 there are 22 magnet schools and 12 magnet programs.

The number enrolled in the magnet program had to be extrapolated based on the average number of students in a Cleveland school.

[13] According to the U.S. Department of Education 39% of students have exercised "residential choice," where access to desired schools influenced where the family lives. (See http://nces.ed.gov/pubs97/97983.html) If we include the estimated 90,877 students in the Cleveland metropolitan area who may have "chosen" their school via residential choice, then only 3.2% of all publicly-financed choosers are currently enrolled in a religious school.

[14] See http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dfm/sms/histmem.html and http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dfm/sms/mpscfnf.html